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Remarks

Reconsideration of the above-identified application is respectfully requested.

The Examiner has objected to the Abstract as not containing the words "and apparatus" after the word method on line 1. The Abstract has been amended accordingly.

Claims 1, 4-8, 14, 16-20, 27, 34-38 and 45 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Blair et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,817,417). With respect to independent claims 1 and 14, however, Blair does not disclose a method or apparatus for attaching a first component to a second component which comprises creating a pressure within a bore of the second component which is less than ambient pressure so that the resulting pressure difference will force a depending portion of the first component into the bore. Although Blair does mention that the "suction effect" will help keep his debris cap 10 in place on the tree 12, he does not teach that this suction effect will force the debris cap onto the tree. In fact, Blair specifically discloses using inlet and outlet valves 30, 32 on the debris cap to allow displacement of seawater as the cap is removed from or installed on the tree (column 2, lines 13-17). Thus, the inlet valve 30 would prevent the creation of a pressure between the debris cap and the tree which is less than ambient pressure.

Therefore, claims 1 and 14 are not anticipated by Blair. Furthermore, since claims 4-8, 14, 16-20 and 27 depend from claims 1 and 14, these claims cannot be anticipated by Blair.

With respect to claims 34-38 and 45, these depend from independent claim 32, which the Examiner did not specifically reject. However, even if this were an oversight by the Examiner, claim 32 is not anticipated by Blair because this claim too requires that a pressure be created within the bore of a tree which is less than ambient pressure so that the resulting pressure difference will force the seal plate of the tree cap into the bore.

The Examiner has indicated that claims 2, 3, 9-13, 15, 21-26, 28-31, 33 and 39-49 would be allowable if they are rewritten in independent form. However, these claims depend from claims 1, 14 and 32, which are patentable over the prior art cited by the Examiner. Therefore, applicant submits that these claims do not need to be rewritten.

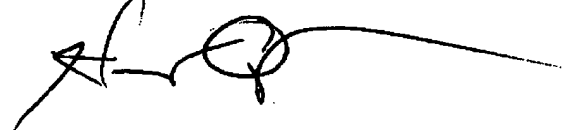
The prior art made of record but not relied upon has been considered but is not believed to be pertinent to the patentability of the present claims.

In light of the foregoing, claims 1-49 are submitted as allowable.

Favorable action is solicited.

Date: March 19, 2007

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. C. Query, Jr.', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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